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*Oct/Nov 2012*



**The Marine Corps League supported the Veterans Innovations Program by carrying a Veterans Raffle Banner in the Annual Vancouver Veterans Day Parade!**

#### **HOW CAN YOUR VSO OR ORGANIZATION HELP GET THE WORD OUT?**

- Ask your VSO or Club post to give a complimentary snack or soda to customers with a Veterans Raffle Ticket.
- Ask local businesses to give a discount to customers who show a Veterans Raffle Ticket.
- See if your employer or organization will send an e-mail to all of their employees or customers encouraging them to buy a Veterans Raffle Ticket!



**Let's be creative and work together to make the 2012 Veterans Raffle a success!**

**If you need copies of flyers, let us know how many and where to send them!  
1-800-562-0132 opt 1 or [communications@dva.wa.gov](mailto:communications@dva.wa.gov)**

Bruce Roe (l) President of the Whisker Club of Bremerton presented WDVA's program manager Ray Switzer(r) with a \$1000.00 donation for Friends of Building 9.

"We now have 60 veterans in the (Building 9 Transitional Housing)program and have transitioned over 200 homeless veterans back into our community who are self-sufficient and are now in much better physical and mental health than ever before in many cases," said Switzer. "Bruce, you have been a part of this success from the very beginning.

"Thanks again and I look forward to hearing from you and sharing our successes as partners in our community."





# A Note from John

## We Really Are One VA When Working Together for Washington's Veterans

When you stop and think about it, most people don't distinguish between the Federal VA, State VA and sometimes even our Veterans Service Organizations. To someone who has never used the VA system, we're all the same VA! So it's in our collective best interests to work together as we help connect veterans to the benefits and services they earned while serving in the military.

Your Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs is working to bring a greater sense of collaboration and communication among all of us serving veterans and their families.

On Tuesday, Sept 25th, WDVA leadership met with the Director and Assistant Director of the Federal VA Regional Office in Seattle and the leadership of the Army Career Alumni Program at Joint Base Lewis McChord.

VARO Director Pat Priebe and VARO Assistant Director Julianna Boor along with JBLM HR Director Mark Brown and Transition Services Director Robin Baker spent several hours with us to develop goals for increasing the number of veterans enrolled in E-Benefits and the number of claims filed using the Fully Developed Claim Program. Both initiatives provide opportunities for our network of Veterans Service Officers to help veterans get connected with their VA benefits.

On Wednesday, Sept 26, we held a Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC) and Commander's Call meeting in Fife. Three groups were formed to talk through the following issues:

1. How and what can Veteran Service Organizations, individual veterans or other community groups do to assist in solutions for homeless veterans? Are there ideas for how to more actively engage local businesses and civic organizations?

2. With the Veterans Benefits Administration and Seattle VA Regional Office emphasis on the Fully Developed Claims process and E-Benefits system, how can Veteran Service Organizations work with the VBA to help increase the number of fully developed claims and enroll all veterans in the E-Benefits system?



3. Armed Forces License Plate sales have stagnated around 13,000. With 670,000 veterans in Washington State, how can we increase the number of veterans, military and family members who will support our State Veterans Cemetery by purchasing an Armed Forces License Plate for their vehicle. How can VSOs help? And, the first Veterans Raffle was successful and netted \$247,000 for the Veterans Innovations Program. But we need our next Raffle to sell out quickly and without requiring additional advertising or promotional expenses. How can VSOs and Washington Business Owners help?



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Veterans in Washington State are served well by supportive partnerships in our Federal, State and County agencies as well as in our Veteran Service Organizations.

Over the next few months you will hear more about how we're implementing the ideas put forward in this week's meetings and we hope you'll get involved in the solutions with us.

Several other important pieces of business were attended to during the VAAC Meeting including the election of the first woman veteran to serve as the Chair of the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee. Captain Kathryn Hobbs, USN (Ret) retired from the United States Navy as a Captain after serving for 36 years. Her Naval career took her to stations around the globe where she earned many awards such as the Legion of Merit (five), Meritorious Service Medals (four); Navy Commendation Medals (four), just to name a few. We look forward to a great year with Kathy as the Chair of the VAAC!

Two VAAC Members were also thanked for their service on the Committee as they completed their terms.



Phil Ruhmshottel, (pictured left with WDVA director John E. Lee and VAAC chair Kathryn Hobbs) representing the Marine Corps League, was replaced on the Committee by Dick Marcylynas. And Dick Whipple, (pictured right with John Lee and Kathryn Hobbs) representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars, was replaced on the Committee by Gary Spevak.



Our next VAAC meeting information will be posted on the WDVA public events page as soon as it becomes available. We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting!



Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Affairs Regional Office Seattle and Army Career Alumni Program Leadership met to develop goals to get veterans connected with their benefits.



<https://www.facebook.com/wsdva?v=wall>

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'John E. Lee'.

WDVA Director



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[http://www.dva.wa.gov/armed\\_forces\\_license\\_plate.html](http://www.dva.wa.gov/armed_forces_license_plate.html)

## WDVA Honors 2012 Outstanding Service to Veterans Awardees

Each year, the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC) and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs recognize individuals who devote time and energy to improving the lives of Washington's veterans, with Outstanding Service to Veterans Awards.

The awards are presented at a special luncheon in Auburn, following the awardees participation in the City's annual Veterans Day Parade, which was held this past Saturday.

This year's Award Recipients are: *Pictured with each of the award winners are WDVA Director John E. Lee (left) and Mayor of Auburn Pete Lewis (right).*

***Congratulations to all of the 2012 Outstanding Service to Veterans awardees!  
We are truly grateful for all the volunteers who step up and make a difference for our Veterans and their families.***



### **Outstanding Volunteer Veteran Service Officer**

**Lawrence Strozyk** lives in Douglas County, serving as a volunteer service officer for the past 10 years with VFW Post 3617 in East Wenatchee. Larry's success rate for submitted benefits claims for veterans has been at a steady 92%, resulting in veterans receiving well over \$1.7 million dollars in retroactive payments. When Larry is not performing his service officer duties, he recruits, volunteers and organizes the Post's Honor Guard for funeral duties and does the same for the Post's Color Guard participations in local veterans and civic parades in Douglas County.



### **Outstanding Veteran Service Officer**

**Richard Calef** is a resident of Stevens County and a Veteran Service Officer for the American Legion. In addition to exceptional service officer work, Richard created the 9-1-1 Memorial Ride which is known throughout the Tri-State region. Richard was also instrumental in the development of the VA Outreach Medical Clinic in Colville. Rick is a member of the National Association of Medics and Corpsmen and maintains a unique Memorial Complex to All Combat Medics on his ranch in Eastern Washington.



### **Outstanding Patriotic Service to Veterans**

**Tami Michaels** lives in King County and is one of the most effective advocates a veteran could have in our state. Last year, Tami advocated for Fisher Broadcasting and KOMO TV to do a documentary on Washington's veterans and the struggles they face coming home from war. This documentary made sure that our community does not forget about the all-volunteer military who risk their safety and well-being for our freedoms.



### Outstanding Female Non-Veteran

**Venay K. Money**, a resident of Clallam County, has been active in the VFW Auxiliary for the past 25 years. Venay participates in the Port Angeles Annual POW/MIA Program, Veterans Day Parades, and is very instrumental in the yearly stand downs in Clallam County. Venay has been instrumental in increasing the Disabled American Veterans Van volunteer drivers from 3 to 11 in her community, providing transportation for local veterans to the VA Facility in Seattle.



### Outstanding Employee

**Michael Flood**, a resident of King County, is the Vice President for Community Relations for the Seattle Seahawks/FC. As a board member of Camp Patriot, Mike has ensured there are enough sponsors to cover expenses for disabled veterans to participate in the yearly events of climbing Mt. Rainier, riding the Pony Express and hunting. Mike was also instrumental in getting Washington's first Veterans Raffle advertised during Seahawks games and coordinating the 2011 Raffle kick-off events with NFL Hall of Fame Player Steve Largent.



### Outstanding Male Non-Veteran

**Hal Bernton** is a Seattle Times reporter and has been the military/veterans community voice since reporting as a war correspondent from Iraq in 2005. Hal's reporting has helped shed light on an unfortunate situation faced by many returning combat soldiers, involving "other than honorable discharges" for misconduct. Hal's investigative reporting has brought attention to the fact that many of these misconduct incidents can be directly attributed to being diagnosed with PTSD prior to the behavior change.

### Outstanding Veteran Volunteers



**The Washington State Women Veterans Advisory Committee** was established in 2008 and is composed of an all-volunteer group of women veterans from all branches of service across the state. In the span of 4 years, this group of women veterans demonstrated vision and actions on behalf of the over 60,000 women veterans. Each year, they have organized a women veterans summit with resounding success. Through the summits, they have connected women veterans to benefits and services they might be entitled to, resulting in a 15%

increase in the number of women veterans enrolled in the VA health care system.



### Outstanding Legislators

**Representative Larry Seaquist**,  
District 26, Gig Harbor

**Representative Barbara Bailey**,  
District 10, Oak Harbor







## The WDVA Vet Corps are at a Washington College near You!

Vet Corps members are stationed at many colleges throughout the state. They help veterans achieve their higher education goals by:

- Working with College Certifying Officials or Veterans Representatives
- Navigating the GI Bill and Financial Aid Office
- Providing connections with federal, state or local veterans benefits.



This program helps veterans navigate Washington's higher education and training programs to help veterans adjust from military life to college life!

Vet Corps Coordinator

Sarah Andrews

[s.andrews@washingtonvetcorps.org](mailto:s.andrews@washingtonvetcorps.org)



Have you worked with a Vet Corps member while attending college here in Washington?

If so, here's your chance to help them improve by taking this short survey!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RVQJDXR>

## Republic of Korea Consulate in Seattle Honor Spokane Veterans Home Korean War Veterans

On November 7, 2012, Consul General Young Wan Song of the Republic of Korea Consulate in Seattle honored Korean War Veterans at the Spokane Veterans Home with Ambassador of Peace Medals and Certificates.

During the ceremony, Korean War Veterans were also asked to share a story of their experience during the Korean War. Several veterans took the opportunity to share a little about themselves, and also to thank Consul General Song for coming to Spokane.

Families and friends of the Spokane Veterans Home Korean War Veterans had the opportunity to witness their loved ones receive the Ambassador of Peace Medal.

In addition to Consul General Song, Spokane Mayor David Condon and WDVA director John Lee were also on hand to thank the veterans and help present their medals.

Veterans and guests were also treated to a performance by the Korean Music Association and delicious refreshments following the event.

Consul General Song previously visited the Washington Soldiers Home in Orting and the Washington Veterans Home in Retsil to honor the Korean War Veterans living there.

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs is very grateful that our veterans have been recognized and honored in such a profound way and thanks Consul General Song for his commitment.







## The National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony on the Capitol Campus was held September 21, 2012.

Kent Wajezyaski and the VFW Post 318 Color Guard Presented the Colors and R.D. Norlean, VFW Post 318 provided the Invocation. The event was coordinated and MC'd by Darrell Pilat, a Vietnam Veteran who has been the driving force behind this annual event.



*I offer the attached photograph (l) in respect for those who have lost their lives in service to this country. I took it in Yakima, as my little granddaughter walked into the Yakima Viet Nam War Memorial with no knowledge of what it was--and yet she knew. She made a little wreath herself "for remembering".*

Kate Bowditch



## Meet Gracie!

Recently Gracie, an adorable yellow lab puppy, got to meet some of the businesses and individuals who made her move to Washington State possible!

Gracie is in training to be a service dog for a Washington State Veteran. She came to Washington through the North Star Foundation, a non-profit that specializes in training service dogs for autistic children. Gracie is in her final stages of training with Wendy Dahl, an animal behavior consultant.

After hearing how much service dogs could help veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury, Chris Lane, an Olympia area veteran and veterans advocate, decided to make a donation. Chris made an initial contribution, but he soon realized he was hooked and knew that what he really wanted to do was to ensure a dog was trained and matched with a veteran in Washington State!

Chris began fundraising in earnest in December of 2011 and reached out to several area businesses and business leaders. ***Thanks to Americas Credit Union, Olympia Federal Savings and Loan, Russ Duncan Insurance and Twin Star Credit Union,*** (pictured above) Chris reached the \$5,000 donation needed to ensure Gracie would serve a veteran in Washington State.

We were also proud to welcome back Brandon and his service dog Huck, for a visit. Brandon was matched with Huck through the North Star Foundation and relies on him for everyday tasks such as picking this up and helping him navigate through crowded public spaces.

Dogs being trained for autistic children have roughly the same temperament as dogs being trained for veterans living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury, so it was a natural fit for North Star to partner with WDVA to place several dogs with veterans. Through WDVA's programs, we've been able to partner 8 dogs with veterans and will work with North Star to place Gracie in the next few months.



Gracie and Huck



Chris Lane talks about how he got involved in bringing Gracie to Washington while Brandon and his service dog Huck look on.





## The Spokane Fair

Once a year Spokane holds the Spokane County Fair and Expo. At this fair there are many exhibits of crafts, baked goods, pictures, science projects and many more items. There is also plenty of livestock, outdoor entertainment, rides, and numerous food vendors. Some of our very own residents entered items into the fair and each resident brought home at least four ribbons. We attended the fair for three days. On the first day we had volunteers that are currently serving in the military at Fairchild Air Force Base, the second day we had the ladies from Odessa's VFW Auxiliary meet us for our women's group, and then on our last day we had volunteers from Spokane VFW Post #51. This was a great chance for residents to get some fair grub, and enjoy the entertainment the fair had to offer!



## Outdoors For All - Adaptive Bike Riding At The WA Soldiers Home

Residents at the Washington Soldiers Home enjoyed a day of adaptive bike riding with the visit from the Outdoors For All Foundation. Residents teamed up with staff, volunteers and community partners, such as the Tacoma Elks and Boy Scouts of America to ride bikes around campus. The day was perfect for this quality of life enhancing experience! This adaptive bike riding program was sponsored by a grant from Disabled Sports USA. The Tacoma Elks plan to sponsor the program for the residents at the Washington Soldiers Home in 2013.



## Kitsap Mounted Posse Support the Washington Veterans Home



The Kitsap Mounted Posse visited the Washington Veterans Home not long ago, visiting with the residents as well as performing for them.

The Kitsap Mounted Posse (KMP) is an association of persons desiring to further the interests of good horsemanship and fellowship among its members, promoting good will and community service activities.

The KMP is a non-profit charitable organization that serves Kitsap County and the surrounding communities. Incorporated in 1957, KMP has supported the county through participation in Corey's Day on the Farm, Wounded Warrior, local food banks, Retsil Veterans Home, Thunderbird Rodeo, Western Washington Special Olympics, and many other local events in the community and across the state.



## Suquamish Warriors Honor Residents at WVH

The Suquamish Warriors sponsored their second annual BBQ for Residents at Washington Veterans Home earlier this fall. About 30 residents from building 10 and around campus enjoyed a day in the sunshine visiting guests and eating delicious hamburgers and grilled hot dogs. When the Warriors sponsor an event, they think of everything, bringing all the food, supplies and treats including many volunteers to help do the work.

This year the Suquamish Warriors presented a beautifully framed patch in old growth cedar to the residents, with an inscription recognizing all the branches of service and thanking the Veterans living at the Washington Veterans Home at Retsil for their service to our country.



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"The official flower of the Military child is the Dandelion. Why? The plant puts down roots almost anywhere, and it's almost impossible to destroy. It's an unpretentious plant, yet good looking. It's a survivor in a



broad range of climates. Military children bloom everywhere the winds carry them. They are hardy and upright. Their roots are strong, cultivated deeply in the culture of the military, planted swiftly and surely. They're ready to fly in the breezes that take them to new adventures, new lands, and new friends.

Experts say that military children are well-rounded, culturally aware, tolerant, and extremely resilient. Military

children have learned from an early age that home is where their hearts are, that a good friend can be found in every corner of the world and in every color, and that education doesn't only come from school. They live history. They learn that to survive means to adapt, that the door that closes one chapter of their life opens up to a new and exciting adventure full of new friends and new experiences."

### STAY CONNECTED



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